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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: NEW AIR MARSHAL: GENERAL REDDA HAFEZ

REF: CAIRO 524

Classified By: DCM Stuart Jones for reason 1.4 (b).

11. (S/NF) Summary: On April 1, the Egyptian press announced the appointment of fifty-six year old General Redda Hafez as the country's new air marshal. Intelligent and fiercely loyal to the regime, General Redda has enjoyed a meteoric rise through the air force hierarchy within the past year to become air marshal. Redda's military background is as an F-16 wing commander. Redda understands that the GOE's failure to sign a CISMOA with the U.S. compromises the Air Force's capabilities. A talented bureaucratic operator, Redda may be able to achieve limited improvements within the Air Force, but he will not be able to effect significant changes due to the President's and Field Marshal's view of the military primarily as an instrument to promote regime stability. End summary.

Professional Background Sketch

12. (S) On April 1, Egyptian papers broke the news that Minister of Defense Field Marshal Tantawi had promoted General Redda Hafez to command the Egyptian Air Force as the new Air Marshal. The mid-March promotion capped General Redda's meteoric rise from Air Force Training Chief to Operations Chief to Chief of Staff to the top Air Force position in a little more than a year. General Redda is a charismatic, personable officer with strong leadership skills. He is fiercely loyal to the regime, very intelligent and a strong leader, three key reasons for his rapid rise. His military background is as an F-16 wing commander. He participated in the 1973 war as a twenty-one year-old officer, and held several Air Zone command positions prior to his promotion as Air Force Operations Chief. Redda holds a Masters in Military Sciences from the Egyptian Staff College. General Redda has significant experience in the West. He participated in a military course in the UK in 1987, and studied at the French War College in 1991. Redda served as a Forward Logistics Officer at Hill Air Force Base in Utah for two years, and spent one year as a student at the Air Command and Staff College in Montgomery, Alabama. His experience in the United States and the U.S.-training he has enjoyed in Egypt appear to have contributed to his pro-U.S. views.

CISMOA Views

13. (S/NF) Redda recognizes that the GOE's failure to sign a CISMOA is the single greatest impediment to Air Force modernization. We assess that General Redda would express

his views on a CISMOA to the Field Marshal, if asked. Redda seems to recognize the technological gap between the Egyptian Air Force and the forces of other regional U.S. allies, such as Jordan and the Gulf states, is due to the lack of a CISMOA. He is personally comfortable using U.S. military equipment and is interested in modeling the Egyptian Air Force on western, as opposed to Russian or Chinese, paradigms.

His Expected Role as Air Marshal

¶4. (S/NF) We expect Redda will move to modernize the Air Force within the parameters allowed by the Field Marshal, but that from his current position he will not be able to achieve significant improvements because of the President's and Field Marshal's policy of using the military primarily as an instrument to promote regime stability, instead of as a skilled fighting force geared toward national defense. However, Redda may be able to make some limited, positive strides, such as retiring older equipment such as F-4's and MIG-21's, which have high maintenance costs that drain air force resources. Due to his positive attitude toward the U.S. and his significant U.S. training experience, we anticipate that he will be supportive of sending Egyptian officers to conferences and seminars in the U.S. He is known as a talented bureaucratic operator, using subtlety and threats to resolve conflicts within the Air Force to his advantage. His subordinates have praised his decisions and expressed interest in emulating him. Within the context of Egyptian officers, Redda is relatively comfortable delegating authority to subordinates, and we do not expect him to be a

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micro-manager as Air Marshal.

¶5. (S/NF) As a relatively junior Air Marshal, General Redda may face challenges in trying to influence the Field Marshal or other service chiefs. Furthermore, in his previous positions as Training Chief and Operations Chief, he was not able to change the prevailing poor training and command-and-control culture in the Air Force. As Air Marshal, he will need to tread a fine line between impressing the Field Marshal with his competence, and taking care not to emerge as a threat to the Field Marshal or other senior military officers.

¶6. (S/NF) Early barometers of how General Redda may differ from his predecessor, Air Marshal Sharawy, will be his handling of the April 21 F-16 crash and the Air Force's standing orders to purchase obsolete Ukrainian and Chinese equipment. Former Air Marshal Sharawy was typically quick to blame F-16 crashes on equipment failures, even when human error was clearly at fault. General Redda's response to the recent crash may provide some insight into whether he will approach such cases in a more straightforward way; the Air Force has yet to issue any findings. Similarly, Redda's approach to GOE orders to purchase antiquated Ukrainian AN-74, Chinese K-8 and JF-17 air systems will be telling. A decision to cancel these orders could signal a positive break with previous short-sighted procurement decisions.

Personal Characteristics

¶7. (S/NF) Married with four children, Redda speaks fluent, idiomatic English. Although he publicly follows the main Muslim precepts while in Egypt, during his time in the U.S. he has been known to drink coffee and smoke cigarettes during the daytime in the fasting month of Ramadan. Redda is not believed to be personally corrupt, which is somewhat unusual among senior Egyptian officers. He appears to enjoy U.S. culture, and during a recent military conference in San Diego, he skipped many of the sessions presumably to shop or enjoy entertainment.

